

DCFS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2005

Board Members

Present: Mona Davis, Lisa McGee, Bruce Cohen, Karen Worley, Connie Hickman, Consevella James, Representative Johnny Key, Stephanie Hammett, Howard Turney, Sherri Jo McLemore

Board Members

Absent: Paul Kelly, June Simpson, Sherry Mangrum, Joyce Warren, John Smith, Claudette Zuber, Amber Reichard, Benny Gooden, Naomi Camyn, Charlotte Ulickey, Carla Reyes, Jerry Walsh, Jerry Jones, Rose Warfield-McGill, Rose Bates, Ray Scott, Dana McClain,

Staff Members

Present: Pat Page, Billye Burke, Rosemary White, Cecile Blucker, Marilyn Counts, Debbie Shiell, David Tindall, Christina Lynn, Bob Sebourn, Georganne Lewis, Debbie Roark, Sheryl Alexander

Introductions

Pat Page welcomed all Board Members present and asked everyone to introduce themselves. New Board Members present were welcomed at this time: Ms. Sherri Jo McLemore, Representative Johnny Key, and Ms. Stephanie Hammett. In addition, DCFS has recently hired Debbie Roark as Planning Manager and Christina Lynn will be heading the Hornsby Zeller team in QA after the retirement of David Tindall.

Review of Minutes

Ms. Page asked if Board Members had reviewed minutes of the previous meeting and called for questions. Minutes were approved as written. Handouts were then distributed generated by ACF regarding Court Involvement in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The review period for the next CFSR begins October 1, 2005.

Follow-up Items

In an attempt to carry out the wishes of bringing additional members to the Board the following additions have been made recently Sherri Jo McLemore with the Arkansas Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, Representative Johnny Key from Mountain Home (District 45) and Stephanie Hammett, a parent from Hot Springs, and Dr. Jerry Jones, UAMS Dept. of Pediatrics Center for Children at Risk.

Connie Hickman stated that there had been a noticeable decline in the 2004 in the placement of children due to staffing shortfalls, which had caused a large backlog in the placement of adoptive children. Rosemary White said that a concerted effort is being made to assess parents in a more

timely manner to meet the adoptive needs. Ms. Hickman said that there is a report that will be issued this fall as part of the Court Improvement Project which highlights concerns about permanency planning and adoptive outcomes. Ms. Burke stated that our goal of finding families for our children rather than children for families has enabled us to see a greater placement of what had, in the past, been considered hard-to-adopt children. Ms. Burke said that financial support, our awareness program and our website have been greatly responsible for foster parent recruitment. Consevella James said that she had been made aware of instances where individuals had not had calls returned and Ms. White said that part of the CHRIS provider management redesign was to address that issue. Ms. Hickman added that she believed that Father Clemmons in his capacity as a dynamic speaker could assist in recruitment. Ms. Shiell handed out a position control report dealing with the vacancies by area.

Ms. Page apprised the Board of a technical assistance grant the state had received to improve coordination between child welfare and substance abuse programs. Bruce Cohen discussed the needs that Arkansas Cares face in this area and the lack of resources. Debbie Shiell said that statistics reflect a 50% decrease in meth labs according to a recent report. Mr. Cohen said one need is for housing and jobs for parents with substance abuse problems; if rights were being terminated for this reason that there had to be a rehabilitation plan available or families had no hope of reuniting. Ms. Hickman said that she had recently seen statistics indicating a 32% increase in abuse and neglect in rural areas due to meth and that lack of resources are key to fighting this and judges are frustrated as well. Ms. Page asked if there was a need to get Joe Hill to talk to the Advisory Committee about the Grant.

Ms. White said that the worker vacancies were improving with meetings with staff and intensive sharing of ideas to facilitate the function of current staff. A special entry rate for several counties is in place as an incentive. Positions are freeze exempt. Special teams went to Northwest Arkansas and are going to Pulaski County for casework for a period of 30-90 days. A map of the new distribution of counties for adoption field staff coverage was distributed.

Ms. Page reviewed for new board members the premise of Garrett's Law and that there would be more materials at the next board meeting.

Billye Burke said that a levels of care system was explored as a part of the PIP. Executive Staff recommended looking at ways to make board payments consistent within the state and for the special board rate to go with the child and the process not begin anew when a child is moved. A pilot was conducted but did not show a significant benefit. Subsequently a study was conducted of the current application of special board rate payment processes that found the current program in place was already doing a good job with a few revisions without the need to completely overhaul it to obtain consistency. The use of the revised CHRIS system and the Supervisory Review Tool have closed the gap in assessing children's needs. Ms. James suggested using the APS system of Levels of Mental Health Care as a way to assess a child's mental needs as well as their possibly more visible physical needs. Mona Davis outlined the processes currently in place.

Mr. Cohen asked about the therapeutic foster care levels of care screening tool and Ms. Burke said that therapeutic foster care is covered in detail by our contracts. Ms. Page outlined the PIP renegotiation with the feds and the alternate methods of addressing assessment and case planning since for technology and staffing reasons have not yet been fully implemented. The memorandum from Mr. Kindle with the subject "Expectation of Practice" was shared with the board as encouragement to the workers to complete thorough assessments and at the same time a commitment from management to try to help with caseload size.

Ms. Hickman said that she is working with Judges in creating solutions to case management and that judges and lawyers have become concerned about the workers caseloads and said that the topic of caseworkers having aides has been discussed. Caseworkers are spread too thin on the whole and it should be taken under serious consideration that aides be available to do the input of information gathered from caseworkers who could be taping their findings to be transcribed or input by someone else. Mr. Cohen suggested that caseworkers be supplied with more technology. Ms. Page said that the PIP Strategy Group 1 is working on such things. Ms. Hickman also asked that there be something like a case worker coversheet used in court presentations that would provide a uniform way for cases to flow where the presentation consists of the disclosure of facts necessary to each case in a consistent manner. She said that the disparity in presentations is counterproductive in many ways.

PIP

Ms. Page updated the board on the PIP renegotiations which have just been completed and work on implementing the strategies continues. Pat recognized Georganne Lewis for her assistance and efforts in the process and handouts were given to the board of the PIP Tracking Matrix 8th Quarterly Report. Ms. Page reviewed the PIP at length with the Board.

Child and Family Service Plan

Copies of the Arkansas Child and Family Service Plans for FY 2005-2009 were given to the Board and the contents were recapped by Ms. Page.

COA Public Agency Roundtable

The COA Public Agency Roundtable is scheduled for October 17-19, 2005 in Little Rock. An invitation was extended to the Board to attend this event and an offer of help was made if it was necessary to help those that needed it in order to participate.

Training

Bob Sebourn shared that the staff training provided by MidSouth in CHRIS is being discontinued and brought into DCFS, temporarily with supervisors and later with staff to be hired.

Quality Assurance

The first annual DCFS training conference will be next spring. DCFS will have CQI training through the National Resource Center on Organizational Improvement this fall. Initially, Executive Staff, Key Managers and CQI Committee Central. Later, Area Managers and Supervisors will be trained and utilize the techniques with their staff.

Marilyn Counts reviewed the role of QA and their recent review of Area 4 and 6. Summaries of these reports were handed out. The supervisory review tool was key to the implementation of the PIP and has a large acceptance and use rate by staff who find it a valuable tool.

Policy

Sheryl Alexander reviewed and handed out policy information for Board review. Ms. Alexander said 25 provisional foster homes have recently been opened and 42 children have been placed. Draft policy on illegal aliens was also handed out for comment. Ms. Hickman questioned whether reporting of illegal aliens was a part of our practice. It was discussed that we are not targeting any group of people and only reporting what information is given to us, uniformly applied to all individuals. Ms. Alexander asked the Board to email her their comments on the policy by the end of the following week.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 3, 2005 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

**DCFS Advisory Board
Action Item List**

- 1) Arrange for presentation on SAMHSA Grant
- 2) Presentation on Garrett's law